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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

January 1, 2020

The Work of Christmas

Grace to you and peace! I sincerely hope that your Christmas time has been filled with moments of joy! I always find the transition from the celebration of Advent/Christmas to the New Year a challenge. In the midst of the December chaos of preparations for special worship services, buying gifts, family gatherings, etc. there were still the opportunities to appreciate the spiritual aspects of Advent/Christmas. Opportunities to focus on God entering into our broken world and bringing the message of love: a message that draws us into hopes and dreams of a better world for everyone.



Then suddenly we hear shouts of “Happy New Year” – and we are faced with New Year’s Eve, the encouragement for New Year resolutions, the turning to a new calendar already too full, and then rush back to our “normal” lives. Even articles in this issue of the *Conference Connection* remind us of events and activities to be listed on calendars!

Perhaps that is why many of us have been drawn to Howard Thurman’s poem “The Work of Christmas.” It is a reminder that within each of us is an element of the incarnation of God and that the message of Christmas has been given to each of us to proclaim and live throughout this new year. As you turn over your calendar to 2020, perhaps take the time to see how your activities will actually continue the work of Christmas as described below. But remember that it is not always about what we do, but also about our attitudes and how we understand others. For this, we need to keep grounded in our spiritual roots of God’s love. May each of you find renewed peace and hope, and new ways to be about the work of Christmas.

Blessings, Char

*"When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among people,
To make music in the heart."*

(Howard Thurman from *The Mood of Christmas & Other Celebrations*, 1985)

News from the Conference Office



OCWM Books Close January 9, 2019

The Conference books for OCWM and special offerings for 2019 will close on January 9, 2020. For money to be counted for 2019 OCWM totals, the check **must be RECEIVED (not postmarked) by January 9** to PO Box 1950, Decatur GA 30031. Any checks received *after* January 9 will be put towards 2020 giving. This includes the Christmas Fund, One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need, and Strengthen the Church Offerings.

Please make sure the checks are made out to the Southeast Conference

with the fund written on the memo line. If you so desire, you can include all the offerings in one check, but please be sure to include a letter detailing what funds how the monies are allocated.

Although our Conference Budget runs October 1- September 30, our OCWM totals for individual churches run Jan 1-December 31. Thank you all for your generous support of the special offerings of the UCC and Our Churches Wider Missions.

From the Generosity Coordinator

Happy New Year! As we ring in 2020, we anticipate all of the magnificent blessings that GOD has in store for us.

We thank you ALL for all the ways you have supported, continue to support this conference and for all the ways you serve. We are so grateful and blessed. Thank you for inviting me to your churches and into your homes. I am looking for more visits in 2020.



Friendly reminder: the books will close on January 9, 2019. Please make sure that your year-end OCWM contributions reach the conference office before that date in order to receive credit for your 2019 contributions.

May God continue to bless you all, richly.
Min. Carrole Moss

Climate Justice Event

Congratulations to the Southeast Conference for receiving a special grant from the UCC Brown Continuing Education Fund to sponsor a Special Event on Climate Justice. Rev. Michael Malcolm, our Conference Environmental Justice Representative, is seeking a few folks (clergy or lay) who will serve as a planning committee for the Event. We have the resources, knowledge, and motivation. We just need a few other interested folks to make the event a reality. Interested or questions? Contact Michael at revmalcom@thepeoplesjusticecouncil.org. We need names by January 15, 2020.



Upcoming Coffees with Char & Heather (Virtual Conversations)

January – Ideas for Lent: You are invited to talk with other pastors about themes and creative presentations as you prepare for Lent. Perhaps you have an idea to share or you are seeking a new idea. Join us for a Zoom conversation. This can be done via computer or phone. Sign up for the date that works for you.

- January 28 (Tuesday) at 7 pm Eastern time: [Register Online](#)
- January 30 (Thursday) at 10 am Eastern time: [Register Online](#)

February – Specialized Ministers: How can the Conference support you in your valuable ministry? The ministry of Specialized Ministers touches hundreds of people and the Conference is grateful! This will be a time for you to share your perspectives on ways in which the Conference can provide support to you.

- February 11 (Tuesday) – 10 am Eastern: [Register Online](#)
- February 13 (Thursday) – 7 pm Eastern: [Register Online](#)

After you have made a reservation, you will receive an email providing you with the link for the connection. If you need assistance making a “reservation” please contact Heather at hfosburgh@secucc.org or 404-719-6572. Come and join with your colleagues in conversation!



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2020. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of January 5

- Bethany Congregational UCC; Thomasville, Georgia
- Donna Farrar
- Leo Maley
- Dale Marshall
- Kimble Sorrells

Week of January 12

- Victory for the World Church; Stone Mountain, Georgia
- Winter Youth Retreat at Blowing Rock Conference Center
- Susie Smith
- Andrew Young

Prayer Concerns

We have received word about the death of the **Rev. Jack Seville**, who in retirement, served as interim pastor at Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill, TN. He had served in various UCC settings in ministry including Conference Minister for the Northern Plains Conference. He and his wife Fanny most recently have been living in Oshkosh, WI. His obituary [can be read on the UCC website](#).

Churches in Transition

Central Congregational, Atlanta, GA; First Congregational, Birmingham AL; Pilgrimage, Marietta GA; First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Peace Church, Clemson SC

News from the Wider Church



Confronting Violence in Houses of Worship

The Insurance Board will present a free webinar for churches on January 9 at 2 p.m. Michael McMasters, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and Ryan Neumeyer, Attorney at Law, are the presenters. [Register here](#).

The Insurance Board specializes in serving churches and related entities within the United Church of Christ and other Christian denominations. Learn more at insuranceboard.org.



National Youth Event Coming in July

NYE will happen July 22-25, 2020 at Purdue University in West Lafayette Indiana. This 4-day event brings together young people who have completed 6th through 12th grade. Often bringing in 4,000 participants from around the country, the time is centered on faith, leadership, service and social justice to empower our youth. Cost: \$375. Go to <http://www.uccpages.org/nye2020/> for video, details, and schedule.

News from our Local Congregations



Covenant Community Church is Moving!

It is with great joy that Covenant Community Church (Birmingham, AL) announces they are relocating to the Lake View area of Southside Birmingham. You are invited to join them for the final worship service in Center Point, AL on Sunday, January 5, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. You are also invited to join them as they begin a new chapter in the life of Covenant on

Sunday, January 12, 2020 at 11:30 a.m. at the United Church Center (formerly Pilgrim Community Church). The Center is located at 2817 6th Avenue South in Birmingham.

Join a November 2020 Back Bay Mission Trip

Have you always wanted to "go on a mission trip?" This may be your perfect opportunity. Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC has signed up to take up to 20 people to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi MS for a Mission Trip Nov 8-14, 2020. There is space for a few more people (at least age 14) from the local Pleasant Hill community and the wider Southeast Conference area. All are welcome. Persons wanting information about the trip should plan to attend an information and planning session scheduled for 2:00 pm Saturday afternoon January 11 (inclement weather date Jan 18) at Pleasant Hill Community Church (PHCC) in Pleasant Hill TN. Interested? Contact a Trip Co-Leader: Mary Ruth 931-277-5231 or Vivian Adzaku at vivanera1@yahoo.com

Training and Learning Opportunities

MID Retreat is Jan 31-Feb 1; Registration Now Open

The Member in Discernment (MID) Retreat will be held in Atlanta on January 31st beginning at 1:00 p.m. and ending by noon on February 1st. This year the focus of the retreat will be a Mental Health First Aid training led by Dr. Kathryn Bryan, PhD, MDiv.

"Mental Health First Aid is a course that teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis." For more information visit <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/about/>.

The cost will be \$80 which includes all the materials for the training, as well as dinner Friday and lunch Saturday.

REGISTER NOW



Clergy (and Spouse) Retreat: March 8-10, 2020

Sparkling or Still: Come to the Waters!

Can you use some time for rest and relaxation? Can you use an opportunity to reflect on maintaining a balanced lifestyle? The UCC Pension Boards is providing the Conference with this unique opportunity for all UCC authorized ministers, spouses/partners, and Members in Discernment as part of their focus on Clergy Wellness!

Place: DuBose Conference Center in Monteagle, TN

When: We begin Sunday (March 8) with supper and end on Tuesday with lunch.

What: The program will include workshops and free time (even an opportunity for a chair massage). Look for future details about the program and workshops.

Cost: The cost is \$20 per person. The UCC Pension Boards is providing the funding for this special event.

Online registration link will be emailed soon.

PATHWAYS Theological Education Celebrates Achievements, Sets Goals for 2020

PATHWAYS Theological Education, Inc. was fortunate to have Rev. Char Burch, Transitional Conference Minister for the SEC UCC, lead a September day-long retreat for the PATHWAYS Board of Directors at First

Congregational Church, UCC, Atlanta, GA. It was a day when creative juices flowed as Char helped us stay on track with identifying our assets and energies which we can invest in the work of PATHWAYS. She helped us to articulate our goals for the next year as we fleshed out innovative ways to reach out to new participants. [Read the full report on our website.](#)

Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders (MSTI)

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center is once again offering Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders (MSTI) from March 23-27, 2020. This course is for pastors and other church leaders interested in learning skills to help them deal more effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict. It will be held at Grace Presbyterian Church in Fort Mill, SC (near Charlotte, NC). Please note that those who register no later than February 21, 2020, will receive a \$200 discount off their tuition. For more information please contact the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center at 630-627-0507 or admin@LMPeaceCenter.org. To register online please go to <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4316493>.

Shari Prestemon Social Justice Internship

[Back Bay Mission](#) will soon be accepting applications for the 2020 Shari Prestemon Social Justice Internship. This program provides young adults between the ages of 19 and 35 with a unique opportunity to participate in a 10-week summer program tailored to their interests. Drawing on the Mission's long experience in community engagement and advocacy for justice, the internship will nurture participants' passion for social justice and develop their appreciation for the church's role in seeking social justice. Applications must be submitted by March 1. Notifications will be made by March 31. More details will be available on the BBM website.

Conference Calendar

Conference Office Closed for Christmas Holiday

December 24, 2019 - January 2, 2020

Clergy Retreat Planning Committee

January 7, 2020 @ 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm EST (online)

Commission on Ministry Meeting

January 9, 2020 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST (online)

Board of Directors Meeting

January 10, 2020 - January 11, 2020 (online)

Winter Youth Retreat

January 17, 2020 - January 20, 2020

Blowing Rock Conference Center, Blowing Rock NC

Coffee with Char and Heather (Virtual Event)

January 28, 2020 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST (online)

Coffee with Char and Heather (Virtual Event)

January 30, 2020 @ 10:00 am - 11:30 am EST (online)

MID Retreat

January 31, 2020 - February 1, 2020

Atlanta, GA (location TBD)

Coffee with Char and Heather (Virtual Event)

February 11, 2020 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST (online)

Coffee with Char and Heather (Virtual Event)

February 13, 2020 @ 10:00 am - 11:30 am EST (online)

SEC Clergy Retreat

March 8-10, 2020

Monteagle, TN

SEC Annual Meeting

June 19-20, 2020

Montgomery, AL

National Youth Event

July 22-25, 2020

Purdue University, IN

View the **full calendar** of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>



Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch**; cburch@secucc.org

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh**; hfosburgh@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss**; cmoss@secucc.org

Director of Communications: **Don Harris**; dharris@secucc.org

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